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"“I Am My Father's Daughter”, last video of the Series "The Richness of Ordinary Life"

This is the sixth and last of the Series of videos presented by Prof. Regina Eya in which she explains how Divine Filiation, a central message of St. Josemaría, can be lived in the ordinary circumstances of life.

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CHAPTER 6

“I AM MY FATHER’S DAUGHTER.”

(Divine Filiation)

I heard an important TV star say this over the CNN (Cable Network News of America) broadcast world wide. She was being interviewed by one of the important journalists in the organization. “I am my father’s daughter”, she proudly announced. This was repeated over the screen almost daily and for weeks. I don’t know who her father is, of course. But I know from the way she makes this pronouncement that her father must be an important man, that she was proud of him, that she would like to be seen as a part of him. This brings home clearly to me what St. Josemaría teaches about divine filiation which has been the basis of much of his teaching.

“My life has led me to realize in a special way that I am a son of God and I have experienced the joy of getting into the heart of my Father to rectify, to purify myself, to serve him, to understand others and find excuses for them on the strength of His love and my own lowliness.”(1)

Basis for imitation of Christ

The realization that I am a child of God should inform every thing that I do or say. It is the basis and my motive for interior life, for a life that imitates Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That I am a daughter of God is what makes my ordinary life interiorly rich, unlike anybody in my position who does not think of God at all. My life in the family, at my place of work, at leisure or civic occasions is the life of a daughter of God. This privilege that allows us to cry out as St Paul would say “Abba!,

Father!” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) enables us, as Josemaría would say, to:

- rectify—ensure that we are behaving in accord with divine daughtership. From time to time one checks to reflect whether one’s behaviour is that of the daughter of such a worthy Father.
- purify—try hard to be like God the Son, since He is the vine of whose branch we are. In other words to strive for perfection to really be like Christ, “another Christ, Christ Himself”.
- serve Him—by doing his will and doing all things well. Serving God means serving others for the sake of God, so all can find God. Doing good and teaching others to do good even in the face of difficulties. Often this means doing our little duties as and when due and living a life of prayer.

- understand others—This we do when we see Christ in others and treat them as such, even when they prove difficult to live with; patiently aiming at leading them to God. This is charity.
- rely on the strength of His Love — on God’s strength and grace in anything we achieve, not just on our abilities alone; realizing that He has created us out of love for us and will support us through His love.
- acknowledge my own lowliness —realizing that we have not merited this Divine Filiation and that we are nothing except an instrument it has so pleased God to use. Humility helps us realize that on our own we are nothing and can do nothing. Whatever we achieve is by the loving kindness of God who has chosen us to use us to achieve

things for Him and for His glory.

To Summarize

Summarizing all this would mean that as a daughter of God I realize that what I am is purely out of God's benevolence, and with that and for that I really owe Him a lot, especially by proving to be a worthy daughter in the way I imitate Him and by loving and serving others for His sake.

I therefore see it as a challenge to behave like Christ, my all powerful and all loving brother, in all the things I do. That is, that I strive always to do the will of God, be eager to do it, be proud to do it, showing others it should be done and can be done and eager to make everybody do it, so as to please my Father and so that He will have many followers.

The secret? Like a child!

Josemaría teaches us that the more childlike we are before God, the better God likes it and the more our achievement. This is because children are daring and can ask for the moon; are not ashamed to make mistakes, and are so very trusting. So for anybody to play son or daughter of God he or she must be like a child and behave towards God like any natural son or daughter would to a natural father who is all-powerful and all-loving. Such a child will be proud to show off whose daughter she is, behave in a way worthy of this father, strive to do what pleases the father and strive to look like and be like this great and noble father.

Christianity: a warfare, not an easy way of life

We find that these requirements are not easy since, as St. Paul says, we are mere earthenware vessels (2 Cor 4:6). We are made of clay. The spirit

may be willing, but often the flesh is weak. To play a good mother all the time, keep a bright and cheerful home all the time, to do my work well all the time, to attend so many civic responsibilities and attend to leisure hours with the right attitudes and intentions, sounds like a tall order and certainly is not easy to achieve, what with the distractions, problems and challenges of modern living. Josemaría agrees that it is certainly not easy, and he reminds us that Christianity was never presented as an easy way of life.

“Sanctity is more attainable than learning, but it is easier to be a scholar than to be a saint.”(2)

One can study in three years for example and obtain a Ph.D. but to live a holy life on a day-to-day basis in ordinary things is not easy. But he encourages us to try our best, beginning and beginning again on a

daily basis, and never giving up until the end. He tells us the secret—to improve our own formation by means of prayer, the sacraments, (especially of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist), spiritual direction, mortification, recollections, constant recourse to Our Lady and the Guardian Angels, etc. He reminds us that

“The life of man upon earth is warfare.’ So said Job many centuries ago. There are still some easy going individuals unaware of this fact.”(3)

“The Supernatural way of conducting yourself is real military strategy. You carry on the war—the daily battles of your interior life in positions far from the main walls of your fortress. And the enemy comes to meet you there: in your small mortification, in your daily prayer, in your orderly work, in your plan of life. And only with difficulty does he get close to

the otherwise easily scaled battlements of your citadel. And if he does he arrives exhausted.”(4)

So we have the means to fight. As baptized Christians we are already children of God. Our sole destiny is to return to Him. We have our brother, Jesus Christ, to show us the way and He has done so. He prayed to His father, he fasted, he taught the way and the truth and did everything well. He taught others to do the same and said the fire which He lit must be made to burn quickly. Souls must be won and won quickly. We need priestly souls who hunger to win other souls. This hunger should be in every daughter and son of God. But still for most of us it is achieved by doing ordinary things.

Daily battle

Bearing these things in mind then I strike out on my daily journey. I have a plan of life, an ordered way of

living that enables me pray, (mentally or orally) and work (at home or away from home) and do other things at appointed times all for God. As a mother, I try then to run my home as Our Lady would, maintaining a constant presence of God and conversing with Him. I take the daily joys and sorrows and “drown evil in abundance of good” when necessary. I do my work in the office without neglecting my home. Often some conflicts arise. There are days that it is all tears. There are days of triumph. When my children behave themselves, pass their exams, and join in the family prayers, I am happy. When my teenage son makes me cry in my pillow, or my husband seems totally inconsiderate, I realize I need more supernatural means. Often confession and spiritual direction help. And when I do my meditations and fulfil the other norms in my plan of life especially at the appointed times, I receive a lot of

consolation and make resolutions to try harder and realize that this is my path to sanctity.

Then the office job brings its temptations. The need for sincerity and accountability and for presence of God in a pagan atmosphere which is regarded as normal. And it is easier to join them, in fact materially more comfortable. Then I do an act of piety, norm, perhaps my spiritual reading of a few minutes each day. And I find St. Theresa telling me that “All that passes away and is not pleasing to God is nothing, and less than nothing!”(5). Then I remember to fight evil and comfort and forgo certain privileges. Later I am happy that I did so, and then I am proud that I have behaved like a daughter of God. At times when it is harder, I find weekly confession a source of strength. And of course when I make out time for long retreats when I “go aside from the crowd”, I find more

time for reflection, for self-examination, for more fruitful readings—and for more resolutions. Then I get back to the crowd with more energy and vigour, more eager to prove a worthy daughter and prove that it is worth while, and therefore more keen on doing apostolate. And I have the interesting feeling that I cannot quite explain, a feeling that God, my Father, is happy. I can see Him smile down at me at times like this and that cheers me up and makes me smile. And my friends wonder what is making me so cheerful! When I forgo these acts of piety, norms, daily or weekly or yearly, I find my charity diminishing and lukewarmness creeps in. With it comes depression and some kind of restlessness. But once I am able to beat it back to spiritual direction—bang!—I get the support I need and I remember I have not been faithful and that's the major source of my uneasiness. Then I see the need to

remain faithful. I rectify my intentions and resolve to begin again and this is always a happy stage, beginning again with hope and gratitude that indeed I am always welcome to begin again. And this assurance makes me want to help people solve their problems. I tell them my own secret. I tell them my own ups and downs and how I have been helped to go through both as a child of God. They see we all have similar problems and circumstances. So I make a few recommendations and they follow. Then perhaps I get carried away and forget them. And they slip through my hands and slip back to their old ways of life. When I see them again I realize that it was my fault. I neglected them. I should have followed up our first conversations and lead them on a little longer until this new style of life catches on. I then realize I must make time for them otherwise I wasn't bringing them nearer my

Father after all and that was my intention, wasn't it! I go back to spiritual direction and make further plans to help people, but to take on a few at a time, and develop genuine friendship with them and not to try the fantastic feat of pulling an entire crowd. So I begin again!

Fighting myself

Then I find in all this that I have to fight. Beginning with myself. I do small mortifications to fight my body and make it obey me like St Paul would say (1 Cor 9:27). Like eating at the dining table instead of in front of the television... small things but sometimes difficult, but good for the children's discipline as well. Like kneeling down for family prayers instead of sitting. Like eating food that I don't like and forgoing the ones I like and without anybody knowing the difference. Like smiling at my husband on the days I would really

have wished to hang him. Like patiently and carefully marking this particular examination script whose author has a very bad handwriting. Like going for my means of formation, punctually, on foot or public transport should my car break down and there is no other way. All this I learned from Josemaría, because he says you must grow in interior life and then automatically apostolate will follow as your life will touch others. Every baptized Christian has been chosen and called to sanctity. This call

“Puts you under obligation to cultivate interior life and to struggle daily to practise the Christian virtues; and not in any way whatsoever, nor in a way which is above average or even excellent. No, we must strive to the point of heroism, in the strictest and most exacting sense of the word.”(6)

So this is the story of ordinary life. On the surface we are doing nothing spectacular. But as baptized Christians called by God to live a holy life in order to see Him, we believe that we must

“Live as the others around you live, with naturalness, but supernaturalizing every moment of your day.”(7)

It is this attitude of supernaturalizing ordinary things and events in life that has provided the richness that I have attempted to describe. Looking at the experience and intentions under the surface, it is a wealth that is not ordinary but very, very rich!

1. St. Escrivá, Josemaría, “Getting to know God,” in Friends of God, 143.

2. *St. Escrivá, Josemaría, The Way, 282.*

3. *St. Escrivá, Josemaría, The Way, 306.*

4. *St. Escrivá, Josemaría, The Way, 307.*

5. *Avila, Teresa, Life, Abridged English translation printed by Assumpta Press Owerri, Nigeria.*

6. *St. Escrivá, Josemaría, “The Richness of Ordinary Life,” in Friends of God, 3.*

7. *St. Escrivá, Josemaría., The Forge, 508.*

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